

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

PALAZZO CORPI

Genoese ship owner Ignazio Corpi constructed the Palazzo Corpi between 1873 and 1882 for his family's use during lengthy stays in Istanbul. Italian architect Giacomo Leoni designed the four-story building in classical Italianate style. Unfortunately Corpi died in 1882 and didn't get to enjoy the completed building. His family leased the building to the United States for use as its Legation that same year. In 1906, the status of the United States Mission to the Ottoman Empire was raised from Legation to Embassy and, in 1907, Ambassador John Leishman purchased Palazzo Corpi to serve as the first Chancery and Residence of the United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. The wing that housed the chancery offices was built the following year in 1908. In 1937 the embassy moved to Ankara and Palazzo Corpi became the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul for the next forty-six years.

The facade is white marble. Inside, the fine appointments imported from Italy include rosewood doors and window frames, etched art glass, and ancient recut marble paving. Ceilings and walls are adorned with pastel colored wall paintings. The mythological paintings on the original dining room ceiling depict Neptune and Diana surrounded by muses and bacchantes rising triumphant. Many original features remain, including moldings, bronze light fixtures, furniture, a metallic framed central skylight, and a grand stair. Missouri Hall, named after the famous American battleship, is the central space on the first floor and was used extensively for diplomatic ceremonies, meetings, and receptions. The back garden preserves quiet greenery juxtaposed against the property's otherwise hard urban surface paving.

Palazzo Corpi is part of the Beyoğlu neighborhood in what was traditionally a European neighborhood full of artisans and embassies. In 2014 the U.S. Government leased the building to a developer and it began a new life as the Soho House hotel and conference center. The Palazzo Corpi is designated by the High Board of Turkish Cultural and Natural Heritage Preservation authority as Category I cultural patrimony.

